

Gregory Middle School Student Focus Group Transcript May 2023ⁱ

Facilitator: Thanks for being here today, everyone! I'd like to start by asking you to tell me about a time you felt really engaged in your math class.

Michael: Umm, I think for me, it was last year when we were learning about multiplying fractions. Like, at first, I didn't really get it. But then, my teacher showed us this cool visual—like, with blocks—and that made it click for me. I was really into it after that.

Facilitator: What does it mean to be engaged in your math class?

Michael: I guess it's like when you're really paying attention, you're not thinking about anything else.

Jada: Yeah, for me, it's when we were doing group work and trying to figure out a problem together. I like when we get to work with other people, 'cause if I get stuck, I can ask someone at my table.

Facilitator: What does it feel like to be engaged?

Jada: It feels like... exciting? Like I'm focused and I wanna keep doing the problems.

Luis: Yeah, I agree. Sometimes I don't even notice how long we've been in class. I'm just, like, into it.

Facilitator: Who helped you engage in math? Was it mostly the teacher or other students?

Luis: Mostly the teacher, but sometimes my friends help me too. If the teacher explains it in a way that I don't understand, my friends break it down and I'm like, "Ohhh, okay!"

Michael: Same here. My teacher and my classmates.

Facilitator: That's great. So, how do teachers support your engagement in math?

Luis: My teacher last year did this thing where she'd let us explain the problem to the class, like in our own words.

Facilitator: And you liked that? Did you explain a problem in your own words?

This project is funded by the National Science Foundation, grant #2200437. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in these materials are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

Learn more about the Adapted Measure of Math Engagement at <https://www.childtrends.org/project/adapted-measure-of-math-engagement>.

Adapted Measure of Math Engagement

Luis: Yeah, I really liked that because I could show that I understood. It made me more confident.

Jada: Yeah, my teacher did something like that too. We'd go up to the board and explain our work. I was really proud of myself when I got the answer right.

Facilitator: What about times when you weren't engaged in math? What did your teacher do that made you not want to do it?

Michael: I didn't like it when we had to just sit there and do problems out of the book, like by ourselves. That was boring. I'd just zone out after a while.

Jada: Yeah, same. If it's just the teacher talking and we're not doing anything hands-on, I can't really stay focused.

Facilitator: What could teachers do to make math more engaging for you?

Michael: More activities where we get to work together.

Luis: And games! I like when we do competitive math games and can win prizes.

Jada: I think if the teacher makes it fun and not too serious, it helps.

ⁱ This transcript was created by ChatGPT and then edited by a human using questions from a real focus group protocol for a project on math engagement for Black and Latina/o middle and high school students.